(c) Information regarding the steps taken by the State Government in enhancing the irrigation facilities in the State of Himachal Pradesh are not available. However, NABARD has been providing assistance in sustainable exploitation of available water under Minor Irrigation schemes in the country and have taken several steps which include, *inter-alia*;

(i) Lower interest rate for refinance to banks for minor irrigation;

(ii) Increase in the quantum of refinance to commercial banks to a maximum of 90%;

(iii) Advising the banks to provide financial assistance to farmers for installation of drip and sprinkler system;

(iv) Providing supplementary loan for rectification of existing pumpsets.

Increasing strength of Central Government Staff

3883. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA : SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether staff strength of the Central Government are increasing despite promise of downsizing;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the concrete steps proposed to be taken to cut administrative expenditure ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL) : (a) and (b) The actual strength as on 1-3-98 was 37,86,865, whereas the same as on 1-3-99 was 37,45,664 showing a net reduction of 41,201 and not increase in the strength.

(c) The austerity measures taken by the Government include ban on creation of posts, reduction in number of sanctioned posts, restrictions on filling up of vacant posts, reduction in office expenses, restrictions on purchase of vehicles, restrictions on foreign travel and on entertainment/ hospitality expenses, etc.